

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-04

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USINT CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 066033

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO ALGIERS AMMAN BEIRUT
JIDDA KHARTOUM KUWAIT LONDON MOSCOW PARIS RABAT ROME SANAA
TEL AVIV TRIPOLI FROM TUNIS APR 6

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1921

DEPT PASS CAIRO

POUCH USINT BAGHDAD

KUWAIT POUCH ABU DHABI

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY, XF

SUBJECT: MASMOUDI ASSESSMENT CURRENT MOOD IN TRIPOLI AND
CURRENT ARAB CONCERNS

1. SUMMARY: MASMOUDI GAVE ME HIS LATEST MIDDLE EAST VIEWS
APRIL 6 FOLLOWING RETURNING FROM BENGHAZI/ TRIPOLI AND BEFORE
OFFICIAL VISIT TO MOSCOW. HE IS WORRIED ABOUT QADHAFI'S
MOOD, AND FEARED SOME "SUICIDAL" ACT. MASMOUDI ATTRIBUTES
MOOD TO GROWING DESPAIR PARTLY CAUSED BY FEAR THT U. S. AND
USSR IN COLLUSION IN MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING NOW IN GULF.
MASMOUDI SAYS ALL ARAB LEADERS BELIEVE THIS, BUT HE IS
OBVIOUSLY OVERSTATING CASE (THOUGH HE MAY BELIEVE IT
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HIMSELF). MASMOUDI ALSO CONTINUES TRY TO PORTRAY QUADHAFI
TO US IN FAVORABLE LIGHT. END SUMMARY.

2. FONMIN MASMOUDI ASKED ME STOP BY APRIL 6 IN ORDER PASS ON HIS VIEWS FOLLOWING RECENT VISITS BENGHAZI AND TRIPOLI AND PRIOR TO HIS OFFICIAL VISIT TO MOSCOW. HE SAID HE FOUND QADHAFI UNUSUALLY ANXIOUS AND REFLECTIVE, PARTLY ON CURRENT EVOLUTION WITHIN EGYPT AFTER SADAT'S GOVERNMENT CHANGES. MASMOUDI CLAIMED THT HE FOUND QADHAFI CONCERNED THAT SADAT WAS PUSHING VERY HARD UP TO THE POINT OF MAKING ALL OUT WAR. MASMOUDI WONDERED WHETHER THIS ANXIETY COULD PUSH LIBYA TOWARD SOME KIND OF "SUICIDAL ACT". HE HAD IN MIND THE U. S. PLANE INCIDENT AND ALSO THE ITALIAN TRAWLER, WHICH HE SAID JALLUD TOLD HIM LARG THOUGHT WAS A SPY BOAT. MASMOUDI SAID HE SKED QADHAFI WHY THE LIBYAN AIR FORCE HAD ATTACKED THE AMERICAN PLANE. QADHAFI RESPONDED MAINLY IN TERMS OF ARAB DESPAIR. QADHAFI SAID THAT NOW U. S. AND USSR SEEM TO BE IN AGREEMENT ON MIDDLE EAST. QADHAFI CHARGED THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD PUSHED IRAQ TO ATTACK KUWAIT. U. S. MUST KNOW THIS, BUT DID NOT REACT. QADHAFI WAS OBSESSED THAT U. S. AND USSR WERE CREATING ANOTHER ZONE IN PERSIAN GULF, LIKE PALESTINE, TO HUMILIATE ARABS.

3. MASMOUDI SAID THAT IMPORTANT THING IS THAT ARABS ARE SAYING THAT U. S. AND USSR IN AGREEMENT ON MIDDLE EAST AND BELIEVE IT, AND IT ADDS TO THEIR DESPAIR. HE SAID ALL ARAB LEADERS ARE BEGINNING TO BELIEVE THIS, INCLUDING THOSE OF GULF. ALLEGEDLY, FONMIN OF OMAN HAD RAISED MATTER WITH QUBOUS, SAYING THAT U. S.- USSR UNDERSTANDING IN GULF MIGHT FORCE A TURN TOWARD PEKING. ARAB LEADERS DON' T UNDERSTAND WHY U. S. SITS BACK IN GULF AND LETS SOVIETS ACT.

4. MASMOUDI RETURNED TO HIS WORRIES THAT QADHAFI - SEIZED WITH SAME DESPAIR. MIGHT BE PUSHED TO SOME SUICIDAL ACT. HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT BOUMEDIENNE HAD COME TO TRIPOLI TO TRY TO CALM QADHAFI DOWN. MASMOUDI SAID THAT HE HIMSELF HAD PRESSED FOR SLOWING DOWN ON LIBYAN UNITY WITH EGYPT. BUT RECENT EVENTS WORRIED HIM EVEN MORE. HE HEARD THAT QADHAFI HAD OPEN CONFRONTATION IN DAMASCUS WITH EL ASSAD. HE ALSO CONCERNED WITH REPORTS JUST RECEIVED THAT FONMIN KIKHYA HAD RESIGNED.

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TM MASMOUDI RETURNED OVER AND OVER AGAIN TO WHAT EMERGED AS PRINCIPAL THEME OF THIS DISCOURSE: THAT U. S. MUST TAKE SOME INITIATIVE IN GULF OR SOMEWHERE ELSE SO THAT ARABS WOULD NO LONGER BELIEVE U. S. AND USSR IN COLLUSION. HE KEPT INSISTING THAT ALL ARABS BELIEVE THIS, EVEN BOUTEFLIKA AND SAQQAF (I DEMURRED SAYING I BELIEVED THIS NOT TRUE IN LATTER CASE). MASMOUDI SAID HE WAS PARTICULARLY WORRIED ABOUT THE GULF. HE REPEATED WHAT HE SAID HE HAD TRIED TO CONVEY MANY TIMES TO USG: THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE VERY INTERESTED IN THIS REGION.

HE SAID HIS OWN CONVICTION WAS THAT EVERYTHING NOW GOING ON SERVES TO IMPLANT SOVIETS IN GULF. HE SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE SAUDIS MUST ACT STRONGLY, EVEN IF NECESSARY GOING SO FAR AS TO "OCCUPY ADEN". HE BELIEVED SAUDIS AND GULF STATES MUST REACH FIRM AGREEMENT WITH IRAN.

6. I RESPONDED THAT WE WERE INDEED CONCERNED ABOUT GULF AND WERE ACTIVE. WE WELCOMED IN PARTICULAR CLOSE IRAN- SAUDI ARABIAN COOPERATION AS BEST WAY TO ASSURE STABILITY IN REGION. FORTUNATELY, THEIR RELATIONS WERE GOOD. WE WERE ALSO WORRIED ABOUT SOVIETS, AND INDEED CONSIDER THEY HAVE STRONG FOOTHOLD IN IRAQ (MASMOUDI ADDED: AND ADEN). I ASKED HOW ARABS COULD POSSIBLY BELIEVE IN U. S.- USSR COOPERATION IN LIGHT OUR INFLUENCE AND ACTIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, NORTH YEMEN AND GULF STATES. MASMOUDI RESPONDED ONLY THAT THERE MAY NOT BE COOPERATION, BUT SOVIETS ARE THERE AND WE GIVE IMPRESSION OF NOT WORKING ABOUT IT.

7. CONVERSATION THEN RETURNED TO QADHAFI. MASMOUDI SAID THAT QADHAFI HAD ALSO EXPRESSED HOPE THAT U. S. WOULD TAKE SOME INITIATIVE IN MIDDLE EAST. MASMOUDI IN FACT HAD SAID SAME THING TO ME IN LAST CONVERSATION SEVERAL DAYS AGO, BUT I DID NOT REPORT AT THAT TIME AS I HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION MASMOUDI FURTHER AND STATEMENT SEEMED IMPLAUSIBLE. ON THIS OCCASION, I PICKED HIM UP ON THIS POINT, NOTING THAT QADHAFI HAS GIVEN NO OTHER INDICATION OF WISHING FOR U. S. INITIATIVE IN MIDDLE EAST. IN FACT ALL OTHER STATEMENTS SEEM ALMOST PRECISELY TO CONTRARY. IF QADHAFI HAD REALLY TOLD MASMOUDI THIS, I SAID, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT NEW DEVELOPMENT.

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MASMOUDI SAID HE PERSONALLY WAS CONVINCED THAT QADHAFI HOPES SADAT WON'T DO SOMETHING RASH. HE BELIEVES THAT QADHAFI DOES NOT WANT SADAT TO MAKE WAR, BUT QADHAFI, ACCORDING TO MASMOUDI, DESPAIRS OF ANY OTHER OUTCOME. THUS MASMOUDI REPEATED TO ME THAT QADHAFI WOULD LIKE TO SEE AN AMERICAN INITIATIVE IN MIDDLE EAST, BUT SAID THAT QADHAFI DOESN'T REALLY BELIEVE THE U. S. WILL DO ANYTHING. THIS TIME HE DID NOT REPEAT THAT QADHAFI ASKED FOR U. S. INITIATIVE.

9. MASMOUDI CONTINUED IN ANOTHER VEIN THAT DESPITE U. S. FRIENDSHIP WITH ISRAEL, DESPITE PHANTOMS, ETC., THE ARAB PEOPLE REALLY LIKE THE UNITED STATES. ARABS DO NOT LIKE THE SOVIETS, BUT ONLY CONSIDER GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS TO BE NECESSARY. I AGREED WITH HIM. I NOTED THAT AMERICANS AND ARABS SHARE MANY COMMON IDEAS AND ARE BASICALLY COMPATIBLE. WE BOTH FAVOR SUCH PRINCIPLES AS

INDEPENDENCE OF NATIONS, LIBERTY AND FREE ENTERPRISE. I SAID THAT WE KNOW REALISTICALLY, HOWEVER, THAT WE CANNOT FOREVER COUNT ON THIS RESERVOIR OF FRIENDSHIP UNLESS PROGRESS IS MADE TOWARD RESOLUTION OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. I SAID THAT WE STAND TO LOSE MORE IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAN THE SOVIETS DO IF HOSTILITIES SHOULD BREAK OUT AGAIN AND AREA SHOULD LAPSE INTO INSTABILITY. WE HAVE A GREATER INTEREST THAN THE SOVIETS IN A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

10. COMMENT: AS USUAL, MASMOUDI TOUCHED ON THESE POINTS AND A NUMBER OF OTHERS IN HIS REPETITIVE MONOLOGUE. I HAVE IMPRESSION THAT HE EXAGGERATES CONCERNS OF MANY OTHER ARAB LEADERS ABOUT U. S.-- SOVIET " COLLUSION", AND ATTRIBUTES TO OTHER ARAB LEADERS VIEWS THAT HE HOLDS HIMSELF. THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND, HOWEVER, THAT MASMOUDI HIMSELF IS PERSONALLY VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF U. S.-- RUSSIAN COOPERATION IN MIDDLE EAST. I BELIEVE HE REALLY CONSDJRS THIS TO BE A DANGER IN THAT IT WOULD FURTHER SOVIET DESIGNS. SOMEHOW HE WANTS TO GET THIS POINT ACROSS TO US.

11. IT IS ALSO EVIDENT TO ME THAT MASMOUDI WAS USING THIS OCCASION, AS HE HAS DONE IN THE PAST, TO PORTRAY QADHAFI TO US IN A FAVORABLE LIGHT. I BELIEVE THAT SOME OF MASMOUDI' S IDEAS, NOTABLY HIS CONCERNS ABOUT INCREASING SOVIET INFLUENCE, MAY BE IN FACT FAIRLY CLOSE TO QADHAFI' S OWN
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IDEAS. SEELYE
UNQUOTE ROGERS

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